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BETHLEHEM

THE PAGEANT OF OUR LADY

AND OTHER POEMS

BETHLEHEM

A NATIVITY PLAY

THE PAGEANT OF OUR LADY & OTHER POEMS

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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PREFACE

All the songs of the 'Nativity Play,' together with the whole of the 'Pageant of Our Lady' and the 'Christmas Songs,' which are here printed, were designed to be set to music by my friend, Mr. Joseph Moorat. Standing thus separate from their context, their appeal to the reader is necessarily incomplete. I can only hope that they precede by a very short time the publication of the music to which from their first inception they were dedicated in friendship, in admiration and in confidence.

L. H.

BETHLEHEM

ACT I.

CHORUS *enters and speaks before the curtain.*

YE Gentles, that come here to watch our play,
Put, we beseech you, thought of us away!
No standing here have we: in heart we kneel,
With, at our hearts, this prayer,—that ye may feel
How in Love's hands time is a little thing!
And so shall Love to-night your senses bring
Back to the hills of Bethlehem, the fold
Where shepherds watched their sheep, where angels told
Of peace, goodwill to men, in Christ new-born,
By Whom, from Virgin Birth, our flesh goes worn.
Also, if we may guide you, ye shall see
The manger where in great humility
Lieth that Babe, the Maker of us all,
By Mary's side, amid the beasts in stall.
And ye shall see the coming of the Kings,
Led by a star; and Gabriel that brings

Unto Saint Joseph, in a dream by night,
Word of King Herod's fear, and counsels flight.
So, lastly, ye shall see them rise and go,
And the place vacant left. Yet ye shall know
That Love remains, and that Faith sees it so.
So, have ye hope! let Time your trust increase!
Hark, I hear music! Christmas comes; 'tis peace.

Pastoral music: a SHEPHERD'S *voice is heard.*

'The world is old, to-night,
The world is old;
The stars around the fold
Do show their light, do show their light.
And so they did, and so,
A thousand years ago,
And so will do, dear love, when you lie cold.'

[*The curtain opens and discloses a bare field with a scarp of rock to the right; in the background are low hills covered with snow. To the left lies a fold surrounded by high wattles. Under shelter of the rock six* SHEPHERDS *are gathered; overhead, with his feet hanging over the ledge, a* SHEPHERD-BOY *sits to keep watch, and at intervals gives the watcher's cry.*

YOUNG SHEPHERD (*sings*).

The world is still, to-night,
The world is still;

The snow on vale and hill
  Like wool lies white, like wool lies white.
And so it was, and so,
A thousand years ago,
And so will be, good lads, when we lack will.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh!

1ST SHEPHERD.

There be good fairies up in air to-night:
Come ere a frost so mild with stars so bright?
The wind has shut itself in-door again,
And all the air be saft like a'ter rain.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh!

2ND SHEPHERD (*rising*).

The sheep be quiet; the dogs have nought to do;
The lambs come kind; there haven't been a ewe
Lost, nor a still one born, this moon, there an't:
A thing I can't remember, nor I can't,
Since I've been shepherd:—that's nigh forty year.

3RD SHEPHERD.

Well, well!

4TH SHEPHERD.

What star be that'n out yonder there?
It's been a-coming on, night a'ter night,
This long time back, but never looked so bright
As 'a do now.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh!

4TH SHEPHERD.

D'you think stars have a way
Of coming out like, special, when they got summut to say?
I've often wondered how it is they are:
You never seem to get no nearer to a star,—
Walk a'ter 'em a mile they still seem just as far.

3RD SHEPHERD.

'Tis as God made 'em. Like as they were geese,
Go a'ter 'em, and they turns tail and flees;
Then you go back, and back they come at you!
So as God made 'em's what they got to do.

1ST SHEPHERD.

Aye, I don't doubt the stars lays facts to mind :
There's them as say men's names be marked and signed,—
Writ in the roof up there, for proof that God's behind.

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh !

5TH SHEPHERD.

You think a star knows what it's all about,
A-blazing for ?

1ST SHEPHERD.

I haven't got a doubt
He does ! That star—now, don't tell me no more
You think he don't know what he's shining for !
Look at him jerking and working, and a-winking and a-blinking ;—
Well,—that's him thinking.

3RD SHEPHERD.

Well, if he thinks the things God sets him to,
Like we poor men, he got enough to do !

WATCHER.

Ay-oh, ay-oh, ay-oh !

4TH SHEPHERD.

There's old blind Abe a-looking ! Don't he seem
As if he saw it ?

2ND SHEPHERD.

Aye ! he likes to dream
He's won his sight back, tho' it's been twelve year gone.
Abe, what d'you think you've got your eye upon ?

ABEL.

A good sight ! aye, and a sight as you can't see
So well as I. The thought just come to me,
While all of you sat talking by my side,
Like to the word the prophet prophesied ;—
And while you talked, the thought o' it kep' me dumb :—
Shiloh, thinks I,—will I see Shiloh come ?
And all at once these words were in my head,—
What he,—the man whose eyes were open—said
Aforetime, 'I shall see him ;—but not now !'
Says he, 'I shall behold him ;—but not nigh :

'Out of Jacob there shall come forth a Star,
'And a Sceptre in Israel shall be raised high.'—
So he bare witness of things seen afar.
And that being told so many years ago,
Yet still to come, do surely seem to show
How we be likelier to behold that Star
Than he who only spoke o' it from afar.
And in that day, 'tis told, the dumb shall talk,
The old shall leap, and the lame man shall walk,
And the blind man recover back his sight!

3RD SHEPHERD.

Well, well, it may be so! God will do right.

1ST SHEPHERD.

May we be there to see when that day shows:
What it can do for such as we—God knows!

WATCHER.

Ay-oh! . . .

[*He breaks off suddenly, leaps down from the rock, and seizing* 1ST SHEPHERD, *points terror-stricken. A sound of wind is heard.*

1ST SHEPHERD.

Why! who be yon fine gentleman in white
Stepping across the sheepfolds to the right?

4TH SHEPHERD.

How comes it that his face be lit so bright?

3RD SHEPHERD.

The blood pricks in my thumbs;
'Tis like a ghost he comes!

[*They huddle fearfully under the rock, crossing themselves.*

Enter GABRIEL.

(*He makes the sign of the cross toward them.*)

GABRIEL.

Let nothing you annoy!
Behold, I bring
Good tidings of great joy:
To you a King
This day is born, to you and all mankind;
Even Christ the Lord, to man's estate resigned.

3RD SHEPHERD.

O Lord, O Lord! was ever the like heard tell!

ABEL.

Hold ye your peace, neighbours! he speaks us well.

GABRIEL.

And of that same
Let this be for a sign :
In Bethlehem,
Cradled amid the kine,
A Babe in swaddling-bands ye there shall find.

4TH SHEPHERD.

Have you no fear ? oh, Abel, but you're blind !

ABEL (*advancing*).

Peace, and give ear ! New light shines in my mind.

GABRIEL.

And as a shepherd he shall feed
His flocks, and in his arms shall bear
The lambs, and like a father fair
The ewes with young shall lead.

[ANGELS *appear*.

ANGELS.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Glory to God
Who unto man
Peace be to earth !
Christ the new Birth

SEMI-CHORUS.

In the Highest !
Now comes nighest.
Goodwill to all !
Redeems man's fall.

GABRIEL.

Ye holy and humble men of fearful heart,
Be not afraid with these to take your part!
To-night God gives you sight; then be not blind;
Behold with us the high celestial mind!
Ye also with one voice must here rejoice.

1ST SHEPHERD.

We be poor mortals! Here's all Heaven in sight!

GABRIEL.

The Heavens themselves are joined with earth to-night.
Fear not, but rise! Mercy and Truth are met;
And Righteousness on Peace her seal hath set.
Stand and be strong,
Ye, too, shall share our song!

[*The* ANGELS *embrace the* SHEPHERDS.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Glory to God; on earth, peace, goodwill!
He smites with His rod, and the waters are still;
He maketh it bud for the evil and good,
He lifts the low valley and bends the high hill.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Thou Christ art the Rod, and Thy reign shall be peace!
At the power of Thy nod, all warfare shall cease.
The desert shall blossom and be as the rose,
When the Healing of nations from Bethlehem flows.

CHORUS.

Glory to God In the Highest!
Who unto man Now comes nighest.
Peace be to earth! Goodwill to all!
Christ the new Birth Redeems man's fall.

[*The* ANGELS *disappear.*

4TH SHEPHERD.

Sir, have we dreamed this?

GABRIEL.

Let your own hearts tell!
Do dreams bequeath such joy? Your bosoms swell,
Your faces glow, your eyes are full of cheer.
Why are they so? Lately you had great fear,
And stood as huddled flocks before a storm;
Have dreams, then, made you warm?

4TH SHEPHERD.

Oh, Sir, 'tis true!
Yet scarcely do I know what next to do.

2ND SHEPHERD.

You come wi' me, lad! come along o' me,
We'll all be off to Bethlehem, and see
What they be doing there! Lord, Lord, I doubt
Whether I'll know to find me way about
With such high things a-happening!
Sir, you see
There ain't much show about the likes o' we,
But what I say's—if this be true—well, well,
'Tis the best news that ever I heard tell!

1ST SHEPHERD.

And the best fortune any on us has had!
Lord, though, but don't it make an old heart glad!
Christ born? You say it is so, Sir? So be it!
Thank God as we should be alive to see it!

ABEL.

Be He at Bethlehem?

GABRIEL.

Aye, there go ye!
While ye so fare, your folds shall guarded be;
Round them even now stand those ye do not see.
Go ye in peace!

SHEPHERDS.

We thank you kindly, Sir.

SHEPHERDS (*sing*).

Now we will go, now we will go,
The way we know to Bethlehem;
That they may show, and we may know,
'Tis even so as you proclaim.

And we will take the bread we bake,
The wine we make, as gifts to them;
And milk and cheese; and on our knees
Will offer these at Bethlehem.

And He shall know we love Him so,
But cannot show a better way
Of service dear, and loving cheer,
Than we do here on Christmas Day.

[*Exeunt several of the* SHEPHERDS.

6TH SHEPHERD.

Sir, do you think that I might make so bold
As offer Him a young lamb from the fold?
'Twas the first dropped this lambing time; maybe
He'll take it kindly from the likes o' we,
We being simple shepherds.

GABRIEL.

Simple? Yes!
Would God, all minds had this same simpleness!
Take Him what gifts ye will! To-night on earth
All's peace to greet Christ's birth.

[*He makes the sign of the cross on them, and turns away.*

5TH SHEPHERD.

Noticed you that?
He made the shepherd's sign: 'a did it pat!

SHEPHERDS (*without*).

Come on, lads, come!

6TH SHEPHERD.

Good-night, Sir.

GABRIEL.

Peace befall
You and your ways! Good-night, friend; good-night, all.

[*Exeunt* SHEPHERDS.

SHEPHERDS (*in the distance singing*).

And we will go, and we will go,
The way we know to Bethlehem;
That Love may show, and we may know,
'Tis even so as you proclaim.

[*As the song of the* SHEPHERDS *dies away, angelic music is again heard softly filling the air.* GABRIEL *covers himself with a* SHEPHERD'S *cloak and stands leaning on a* SHEPHERD'S *crook by the rock that overlooks the fold. A light begins steadily to increase and flood the stage, coming from the left. Enter presently the* ANGEL OF THE STAR. *As he crosses the stage, bearing the Star in his hands,* GABRIEL *kneels down in reverence. The* ANGEL *departs upon the road to Bethlehem. Enter the* KINGS. *They advance, singing, along the higher ground at the back of the stage, and descend by a winding path toward the front. During what follows their processions pass silently along the road to Bethlehem, following the light of the Star. Only the* KINGS' *banner-bearers remain, standing motionless to the end.*

1ST KING.

Hear me, O King of Kings,
And give me my desire!

2ND KING.

Hive me beneath Thy wings,
And guide my feet with fire!

3RD KING.

Unto that Holy Mount,
Where forth from Thee goes Light.

ALL.

Whence springs a Living Fount
To wash the whole world white.

GABRIEL.

Peace be with you, and hail!
Where go ye this fair night,
Travellers, and what seek ye?

1ST KING.

We seek from the hill the vale,
And from the vale the hill.

2ND KING.

From the ends of the morning, rest;
And from the East the West.

3RD KING.

In the darkness we seek fire,
And out of dreams the heart's desire!
And, if to-day we fail,
To-morrow we seek it still.

GABRIEL.

Are ye not weary, seeking so?
Are ye not laden with care?

1ST KING.

We are not weary. If our feet be slow,
'Tis with the burden of the Love we bear.
It is our longing for the Light we seek
Which makes us weak.

GABRIEL.

What is the longing of each one?

3RD KING.

Melchior, wilt thou first speak?

2ND KING.

Too slow my footsteps move
For the goal I seek to prove.

My body is a waste,
Through which my soul doth haste,
Famished until it taste
Its nameless new desire!
A flame my spirit owns,
Ashes are all my bones,
Love lights in me such fire!
I thirst! my throat is dried!
I ask;—am still denied!
Cry to be satisfied:
Yet only as Love will.
Now, if He come not first,
Not death, but ease were worst;—
Let me die, thirsting still!

GABRIEL.

And you?

3RD KING.

I have such Love!
Beauty, I know not of,
Hath laid on me the vision of its Light.
When that Light shines, earth's ends
Therein shall all be friends:
They shall not hurt nor kill, but on the height
Named Holy shall be peace.

Then shall all warfare cease,
And every king his crown
Shall at the cradle of a new-born Babe lay
down.

GABRIEL.

And thou, that standest last,
Say what desire thou hast?

1ST KING.

For Earth's waiting to be done;
For God to send forth His Son,
Godhead and man made one!
That creation, wrought afresh,
May be finished and made whole;
That the Word may become Flesh,
And Earth receive her soul!
Pray we for this,
Seeing well how good it is.

GABRIEL.

Behold, this night shall bring you to your bliss.

3RD KING.

Whence comes thy knowledge to make hope so
near?

GABRIEL.

Oh, let your ears be opened till they hear!
Open your eyes, and mark with fearless sight
The throng of thanksgiving which fills this night:
Nor walks on heaven alone, but earth as well!
Sound in sweet tone, celestial Choirs, and tell!

ANGELS (*appearing*).

Glory to God In the Highest!
Who unto man Now comes nighest.
Peace be to earth! Goodwill to all!
Christ the new Birth Redeems man's fall.

[*They disappear.*

1ST KING.

Oh, ye blest sounds, be as the air we breathe!

2ND KING.

Oh, fair things seen, your light to us bequeath!

3RD KING.

And if there be an ending to our quest,
Show, now, where lies our rest!

GABRIEL.

O Kings, your quest is ended now, earth joins
To greet her Lord, in Heaven's exultant strains.

Righteousness is the girdle of His loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of His reins.
The Spirit of God shall rest on Him, of might,
Of wisdom, and of counsel, and of fear :
He shall not judge according unto sight,
Neither reprove by the hearing of His ear :
But by His righteousness shall He do right,
And with His equity the meek repay ;
Out of His mouth a rod the earth shall smite,
And by His breath the wicked He shall slay.
The wolf shall make his dwelling in the fold,
The leopard and the kid together play,
The young lion with the fatling : and behold
A Little Child shall lead them in the way !
Then like the ox the lion shall eat straw,
The calf and the young bear be in one pen ;
The suckling from his hole the asp shall draw,
And the weaned child play by the adder's den.
They shall not hurt in all my Holy Hill,
Nor shall there any more destruction be :
The knowledge of the Lord the earth shall fill,
Even as the water covereth the sea.
And He shall raise His people from their sin.
This is the way of Life : walk ye therein !

[*A vision of a Young Child appears before them in the way leading to Bethlehem. All kneel.*

1ST KING.

Where shall we find Him? where throw off our load?

GABRIEL.

In Bethlehem Peace makes His fair abode.
Yonder His star still lights you to your road.

[*The* KINGS *depart.* GABRIEL *makes the sign of blessing and is taken up into heaven.*

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II.

CHORUS *enters and speaks before the curtain.*

O ye, that would go in to Bethlehem town,
Now let your hearts for very love bend down!
So, in one fellowship with herds and kings,
Will we too see Peace close her mothering wings
Round all the world, and reap into her breast
The million ills which here come seeking rest.
At these dear doors all may afford to wait
Where Love in pure humility keeps state.
Draw near in faith! Then, by these figures dim,
Through us presented, may ye look on Him
Whose Light till now outshone the Seraphim.
Come, little Town, your narrow doors undo,
To show how our dear Love is born in you!

[*The curtain opens and shows the inn-stable at Bethlehem. An open court, surrounded on three sides by a cattle-shed with thatched roofs. In the centre stands a large 'cradle' for fodder, above which hangs a canopy rudely constructed of a cloak thrown over a traveller's staff thrust*

into the eaves of thatch, from which also a small lantern hangs. Above the roof shows a clear starlit sky. At the back of the stable to the right is a door opening to the street; at the left a cave in a wall of rock shut off from the rest of the stable by a large grille, behind which the beasts are stalled. MARY *reclines in the cradle, with the* HOLY CHILD *concealed beneath her robe.* JOSEPH *is seated near by on a low stool. His shoes lie near him, together with staff, lantern, and saddle-bags. He bends over a scroll of parchment, reading. Without, voices are heard singing.*

'Noel, Noel, Noel,'
Sang the church bell;
God's in His Heaven,
This know well!'

Noel, Noel, Noel,
Ding-dong-bell,
God from High Heaven
Comes on earth to dwell.

'Noel, Noel, Noel,'
Bells ring on earth,
'Come and know well
This bright Birth!'

JOSEPH (*rising and advancing to the cradle*). Sleepest thou, Mary?

MARY.

I sleep not ; I pray.
Behold, on me my Lord His Head doth lay.
Look how in sleep He takes a mortal's rest :
See where His Hand is laid upon my breast !

JOSEPH.

Mary, I dread to see !

MARY.

Nay, come more near ;
But wake Him not !

JOSEPH.

Alas ! I have such fear.

MARY.

I, too : my soul is glad through very dread
While in this chamber God doth make His bed :
For now our eyes behold the glorious Birth
Which shall uplift again low-fallen earth.
Here, where He rests, amid these hollowed rocks,
I hear the world's heart move in joyful shocks,—
The pulsing of her rivers and her springs :
I feel the air beat with the throb of wings :

And farther up, amid the heavenly maze,
The stars and planets with adoring gaze
Look down and say, 'O maid with favour stored,
How com'st thou to be Mother of our Lord?'
What can I answer, I? Let Gabriel
Speak to those heavenly questioners, and tell
How by the Holy Ghost this came to be;
How power from the Highest o'ershadowed me,
Till in my heart God came Himself to lie,
Perfect fulfilment of all prophecy.
Naught may I know save this: His handmaid I.

VOICES.

'Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum! Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et Benedictus Fructus ventris tui, Jesus.'

[*A knocking is heard, and a sound of pastoral music without.* JOSEPH *passing before the crib bows down in reverence. He goes to the door.*

JOSEPH.

Who knocks?

SHEPHERD (*without*).

A friend: we be all friendly men:
We be the shepherds.

JOSEPH.

Come in, shepherds, then :
Here's welcome waiting you ! Behold and bless
The Peace within your gates, the Plenteousness !

[*The* SHEPHERDS *enter. As they come within sight of the crib they pull off their hats, cross themselves, and kneel.* MARY *makes the sign of the cross toward them in greeting.*

IST SHEPHERD.

Mother of God, welcome to Bethlehem !

MARY.

Shepherds of Israel, welcome to Christ's Birth !

OMNES.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee ! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death. Amen.

MARY.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord !
So as His Word hath His Way been ;

Now Earth to Heaven doth room afford ;
The Godhead veiled in Flesh is seen.
Come and adore, in form of man,
The Word that was ere worlds began !

[*She raises herself and sits with her mantle still covering the* HOLY CHILD.

OMNES.

Mother Mary, hail !
And of thy Grace,
Lift away the veil
That hides God's face !

Here God lies
For a short space.
Mary, Mother wise,
Show us God's face !

Mary, all the lands,
Mary, all the seas,
Gather in thy hands
To thy dear knees !

Mary, maiden white,
Mother, pure within,
Show to mortal sight
Love that cures sin !

1ST SHEPHERD.

Mother Mary, may we see God?

MARY.

Stand near in faith, behold,
Be comforted by Him!
Here, shepherds, is your fold.

ABEL.

Lady, I cannot see: mine eyes are dim.

MARY.

Come near, in faith: come near!
Thou shalt win sight.
Doubt not: have thou no fear!

ABEL.

Lady, mine eyes be healed and full of light!

MARY.

Even so, even so,
Let Earth perceive and know!

[JOSEPH *aiding*, MARY *lifts her mantle and reveals* CHRIST *to them. All bow forward in adoration and are silent for a time.*

1ST SHEPHERD.

Son of God, shine on us!

2ND SHEPHERD.

Lamb of God, look on us!

3RD SHEPHERD.

Shepherd of men, set Thy sign on us!

4TH SHEPHERD.

And lay Thy yoke on us!

5TH SHEPHERD.

And we will be thankful.

[MARY *again covers the* CHILD.

1ST SHEPHERD (*kneeling*).

Queen, Mother, pardon me who make so bold
To speak! but hearts grown full be hard to hold.
To-night, as Heaven hath willed, have come thy way
Poor folk with meagre speech yet much to say.
So, if word lack, let thine own wisdom fill:
And—give me countenance!—I'll not speak ill.
Dear Mother, pray for us! Foolish we be,

Untaught and rude : but what we see we see,
And what we hear we hear ; to what's above
Our heads we bow : and what we love we love !
And, loving thee since our first entrance in,
Do thereby more love God, and more hate sin ;
And of all lips would have thy lips to pray
Pardon for us and peace to seek His way.
Fair Mother, we have old men here among,
As thou may'st see ; and thou, we see, art young :
Yet the name 'Mother' runneth to the tongue
That seeks a name for thee. May we not all
Thee as our Lady and our Mother call,
For thy Son's sake ?

MARY.

Amen. So, shepherds, do !
Call as Love bids you, and I'll answer you.

[*The* SHEPHERDS *come forward and present their gifts.*

1ST SHEPHERD.

Mother, I have laid bread here at thy feet.
For thy Son's sake, I pray thee take and eat !

2ND SHEPHERD.

Mother, I bring thee milk.

3RD SHEPHERD.

I bring thee cheese.

4TH SHEPHERD.

I have brought nuts. Strengthen His teeth on these,
When they begin to pair.

5TH SHEPHERD.

Also here's wine,
Good for a festal, or when frost bites fine.
Also my cloak is thine.

6TH SHEPHERD.

Dear Mother, for God's sake,
Wilt thou, I prithee, take
This firstling from the fold ?
It is so beautiful,
And thereto hath warm wool
To ward one from the cold.
Take it, then, to thy lap
Beside thy Son :
It may keep warm, mayhap,
The Blessed One.

MARY.

It shall keep warm my heart, shepherd, to thee

7TH SHEPHERD.

Mother, my empty hands do me a wrong :
No gift have I, but in my lips a song
Such as we shepherds sing.

MARY.

Such songs are best.
To-night your lips shall lull the Shepherd's King
To rest.

7TH SHEPHERD (*sings*).

The world is old to-night,
The world is old ;
The stars around the fold
Do show their light.
And so they did, and so,
A thousand years ago.
And so will do, dear Love, when you lie cold.
(*Speaks.*) Nay, nay, but I can sing no more thereof ;
I had forgot the sadness of the end !

MARY.

Thou hast but prophesied how men shall scoff
Even at Love, my friend.

[*Knocking is heard.*

JOSEPH.

Ho, there without ! Who knocks ? Come ye in
peace ?

KINGS (*without*).

Kings, seeking it, we come!

JOSEPH.

Here enter, and find ease!

[*The* KINGS *enter and advance, kneeling three times.*

1ST KING.

Blessed be God!

OMNES.

Blessed be God!

2ND KING.

Blessed be His Holy Name!

OMNES.

Blessed be His Holy Name!

3RD KING.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!

OMNES.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man!

1ST KING.

Oh, finished quest!
Oh, rest!

2ND KING.

Oh, Fount, that first
Of all hath satisfied my thirst!

3RD KING.

Oh, Light,
That brings me sight!

1ST KING

(*approaching kneels before the cradle*).

Thou Birth Divine,
Behold,
The earthly sign
Of power and kingship, gold,
Here in my hands I hold,
And offer, to be Thine.

2ND KING (*approaching and kneeling*).

This frankincense
Let be
A symbol, whence
All men may learn to see
How veiled a mystery
Defeats man's sense, where Godhead deigns to be!

3RD KING (*approaching and kneeling*).

Oh, Comforter of souls,
I bring Thee myrrh.
When grief my heart controls
And darkness round me rolls,
Sweet Saviour, be Thou near!

THE THREE KINGS.

Thanksgiving, Praise, and Prayer,
Three offerings meet,
We lay in equal share
Before Christ's feet.

MARY.

Your welcome gifts,
Proffered in love, from Earth to Heaven He lifts.

THE KINGS

Now see we Love on Earth His throne!
All we have known,
Or hoped to gain,
Was this alone—
That He might reign!

OMNES.

That He might reign!
Oh, welcome Birth! let all adore
The Christ made Man for evermore.

THE SHEPHERDS.

'Tis Christmas morn:
Come ye, and bow the knee!
Lo, here we see
The perfect Man is born.

CHORUS

(*in alternate parts*, KINGS *and* SHEPHERDS).

For this fair Birth
(Which now we see!)
Shows forth God's worth,
(Then sing we merrily!)
And makes glad earth,
And brings man mirth.
(So sing we merrily this fair Birth!)

THE KINGS.

'Tis Christmas Day:
Oh pray,—put off your sins!
This day begins
For man the perfect way.

CHORUS (*as before*).

For this fair Birth
(Which now we see!)
Shows forth God's worth,
(Then sing we merrily!)
And makes glad earth,
And brings man mirth.
(So sing we merrily this fair Birth!)

[*During this song the Attendants of the* KINGS *have entered secretly, and kneel in an outer ring about the walls of the stable.*

OMNES.

Mother Mary, give us thy Son's Blessing!

[*All kneel.*

(*They sing.*) Mary, Gate of Day,
Lend thine intercession!
Holy Mother May,
Pray for my transgression!

Ere He yet touched Earth,
He did first touch thee;
Through thy perfect worth
God reached down for me.

[MARY *rising, stands in the cradle under shadow of the canopy, displaying the* CHILD *in her*

breast, still partly covered by her veil. JOSEPH *and one of the* SHEPHERDS *lift and draw back the ends of her long robe.*

MARY.

The word expressed
In Flesh hath come ;
Against my breast
The Voice lies dumb,
That shall be of all prophecies the sum.

Oh, Thou dread Voice
Of Heaven's decree,
Who madest choice
To dwell with me,
Now through my lips, this once, let utterance be !

My Peace I leave,
My Peace I give :
All that receive
The same shall live ;
And tribute hearts win joy retributive.

The Cup I bless,
The Bread I break,
Is Righteousness !
Draw near and take !
Eat, drink, and hold remembrance for Love's sake !

The peace of Peace,
Outpassing sense,
Give your mind's ease
When ye go hence.
Love, peace, and pardon be your recompense!

[*She seats herself in the cradle as one enthroned, laying the* CHILD *upon her knee under shadow of her robe.*

OMNES.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of our death. Amen.

MARY.

Kings from far countries have ye come to see
A King Whose reign shall make all kingdoms free.
Low at His feet your crowns ye cast to ground;
From this day forward ye shall go more crowned;
For, named hereafter, ye shall be named wise,
Seeing that in Heaven ye watched Christ's star arise.
Great kings ye came, but much more great ye go,
Who to His state have bowed yourselves so low.
And you, dear Shepherds, to your settled folds

Return, and father your sweet flocks to rest!
Though Heavenly signs depart, Heaven's purpose holds,
Where Earth's Redemption slumbers at my breast.
Look where He lies! Kiss ye His feet, and go!
Your Shepherd He: Whose sheep are ye, I know.

[*Now, as she speaks, one by one they advance and do homage, and return to their stations and kneel.*

When mothers teach to babes their mother-tongue,
This tale shall first be told:
How to His birth ye came in days of old,
While starlight led and seraph-voices sung.
So, in that story, shall your names stay young.
Farewell; give thanks for this! Ye to Christ's fold
Are come. Take all the bliss that hearts on earth may hold!

[*All kneel in silence. The starlight fades, the stage darkens; only the light of the lantern remains. One by one,* SHEPHERDS *and* KINGS *rise, make a reverence toward the crib, cross themselves, and depart.* JOSEPH *closes the door after them. He lets down the curtains of the canopy over the sleeping* MOTHER *and* CHILD, *lays by the offerings with care, and sinks down wearily to rest. In the darkness*

the shining faces of angels are seen watching: they disappear after GABRIEL *has spoken to* JOSEPH. *Outside the* SHEPHERDS *and* KINGS *are heard singing till their voices die away in the distance.*

SHEPHERDS AND KINGS (*without*).

I heard on Christmas night
The loud bells ringing:
'New Life and Light
Christ comes bringing!'

Chorus.

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be!
So God bless you!
And God bless me!

I heard on Christmas night
The glad news pealing:
'Christ to human sight
Now gives healing!'

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be!
So God bless you!
And God bless me!

I heard on Christmas night
The high Heavens telling :
'Christ who left His height,
On earth finds dwelling !'

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be !
So God bless you !
And God bless me !

From Mary, Queen of Might,
Comes down sweet saying :
'I hear, on Christmas night,
All poor hearts praying !'

Oh, that is true, is true,
And better could not be !
So God bless you !
And God bless me !

Enter GABRIEL.

GABRIEL.

Servant of God, sleep not, awake !
Saddle the ass ere dawn of day ;
The Mother, and the young Child take,
Whom Herod seeketh now to slay ;

Get thee hence ere the wakening bird
  Hath sung ; to Egypt win thy way :
There, till I come and bring thee word,
  Shalt thou in hiding stay.
As thou hast heard, make haste, obey !

[*Exit* GABRIEL. JOSEPH *lies heavy with sleep ; he stirs slowly, and with great pain rising, goes and kneels where* GABRIEL *has stood. Then he goes to the stable and makes ready, lading his beast and opening the doors which lead on from the further stable to the street. Then he returns, and rouses* OUR LADY *from rest.*

JOSEPH.

Mary, arise ; hence must we go,
Even before the dawn of day.

MARY.

It is God's will ?

JOSEPH.

'Tis even so :
His angel's word.

MARY.

Which we obey.

[*They go out to the stable, whence presently the sound of hoofs going forth is heard. Bells*

are heard, and dawn begins to show. A stableman, carrying a lantern, stumbles in, heavy with sleep; he looks round surprised to find the place empty. Then on the ground he sees, for payment, three gold coins lying. A holy fear takes hold of him; he uncovers and kneels before the empty crib.

VOICES OF CAROL-SINGERS (*without*).

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay!
Because that Jesus Christ our Lord
Is born on Christmas Day!

[CURTAIN.]

Enter CHORUS.

Chorus. Oh Maid and Holy Child, where have ye gone?
Lost are the voices, sets the Star that shone:
Back to their folds have gone the shepherd-band:
Each king is now returned to his own land.
Love is gone forth into the world to win
Saints to their rest, and sinners back from sin.
Gentles, O ye that here have watched our play,
Tell me, I pray you, did He pass *your* way?

Say have ye Him safe, each one, in his breast?
Oh, hold Him well! So shall we all have rest.
The grace of Jesus Christ, who is our Lord,
The Love of God, the Holy Ghost's accord,
Be with us all! And Heaven be our reward!

Amen.

THE PAGEANT OF OUR LADY

THE PAGEANT OF OUR LADY

Here are set forth the arrangements of the stage, and the figures that are gone through by the actors to the accompaniment of words and music.

At the back of the stage to the centre stands a bower for OUR LADY *raised upon two steps above the level of the floor. The bower has a canopy upon four pillars; upon the hind pillars swing folding-doors which open forward at the beginning of the chorus of verse* 2, *whereat* OUR LADY *is led forward by Love dressed as a herald. He leaves her under the canopy and descends.*

To left and right of the stage and forward to the audience are two railed places or pews, wherein stand some four or five singers on each side, who sing in alternate verses the opening song of the pageant. Upon the stage a CHORUS OF YOUTHS *with hand-bells, dance and ring at intervals.*

Behind the bower to left and right are two archways, through which enters, first, to the right, GABRIEL, *who at verse* 3 *comes running and kneels low, offering the lily to* OUR LADY, *and making to her the sign of the cross.* GABRIEL *and* LOVE *embrace, and* GABRIEL *departs. Then to the left enters* ELIZABETH *who kneels and is lifted and embraced by* OUR LADY. *While* OUR LADY *sings* Magnificat, ELIZABETH *and* LOVE *kneel upholding her to right and left. The ringers and choristers seat themselves*

reverently during the singing, and kneel and rise when it is ended.

At verse 13, ELIZABETH *leads* OUR LADY *within, and the doors of the bower are closed,* LOVE *standing as sentinel thereat.*

Then enter, to left and right, first the SHULAMITE *and her train of Virgins; then* SOLOMON *attended by his Court. At first the* SHULAMITE *and* SOLOMON *are without ensigns of royalty. She is veiled, and he wears a shepherd's cloak and carries a staff. Afterwards they assume their crowns: and King's and Queen's robes are put on them. A canopy is brought and raised over them when they embrace; the curtains are let down, and they are led thus to the bower. Presently the curtains are raised and disclose* SOLOMON *and the* SHULAMITE *kneeling to left and right with their trains behind them. From the doors at the back enter* OUR LADY *crowned and bearing the* CHILD *in her arms.*

Priests enter swinging before them censers, and in their midst SIMEON, *who, kneeling, sings the* Nunc Dimittis, *all the rest joining after him.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

1. Come, minstrels and players,
   Make ready to play;
   And singers and sayers,
   Be loud in your lay!

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

2. And all ye be wary
   Of what we shall tell

In honour of Mary,
Whom God loves so well!

CHORUS OF YOUTHS (*with hand-bells*).

Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-rol-de-ray!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

3. Now first shall be given
Lord Gabriel's word,
When down from high Heaven
He dropped like a bird;

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

4. And to that pure maiden,
Conceived without sin,
With glad tidings laden,
Low-bending came in.

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

5. And crying, 'Hail, Mary!'
Outspake he glad doom
On her that should carry
Our Lord in her womb.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

6. Now all ye be wary,
And hearing take heed,
In honour of Mary
Who bore that bright Seed!

CHORUS OF YOUTHS (*with hand-bells*).

Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-rol-de-ray!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

7. Now when Mary knoweth
The word that he saith,
Arising she goeth
To Elizabeth,

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

8. Who, when our Salvation
Toward her so drew,
In glad salutation
Gave welcome thereto.

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

9. For when in her dwelling
   The Godhead found room,
   Christ's advent foretelling,
   Babe leapt in her womb.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS (*with hand-bells*).

Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-rol-de-ray!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

10. Then guarded thus meetly
    Her kinsfolk among,
    Our Lady full sweetly
    Magnificat sung.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

11. And be ye not chary
    To sing that same lay,
    In honour of Mary,
    Who taught you the way.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS (*with hand-bells*).

Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-rol-de-ray!

(OUR LADY SINGETH).

My spirit voiceth
  The Lord His praise,
My soul rejoiceth
  In God His ways.

For His handmaiden,
  Lowly of state,
My Lord hath laden
  With favours great.

Lo, through gradations
  Of time confessed,
All generations
  Shall call me blest!

For He that is mighty
  Hath magnified me:
Laud His name rightly;
  Holy is He!

His mercy fendeth
  The meek from harm,
Till all time endeth ;
  Strong is His Arm.

The proud, who flattered
  Their hearts in war,
His Hand hath scattered
  His Face before.

The high He hath halted,
  The strong made weak,
And hath exalted
  The humble and meek.

With food He hath given
  The hungry stay ;
The rich He hath driven
  Empty away.

His mercy's token
  He mindeth well ;
The help bespoken
  For Israel.

That His right Hand
  Should fail us never,
Abraham, and
  His seed for ever.

FULL CHORUS.

12. Now be ye not chary,
All you that have heard,
In honour of Mary,
To greet the glad word!

CHORUS OF YOUTHS (*with hand-bells*).

Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-rol-de-ray!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

13. Yet seek not, fair mortals,
Aught further to know,
While under safe portals
Our Lady doth go.
[*They close the doors of her bower.*

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

14. But keep ye in reason,
And hold ye from mirth,
Until in good season
Christ cometh to birth.

1ST SEMI-CHORUS.

15. So while round her chamber
The seasons do run,
We bid you remember
Both Mother and Son.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS.

16. And all ye be wary
Of what we have told,
In honour of Mary,
Whom God loved of old !

CHORUS OF YOUTHS (*with hand-bells*).

Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-ray,
Hol-de-rol-de-rol-de-ray !

[*A dance of Masquers about the closed bower follows, set to solemn glad music.*

THE SONG OF THE MASQUERS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ: Solomon, the Shulamite, Chorus of Men, Chorus of Women.

Shulamite and Women's Chorus.

I am black, but I am comely as the tents are in Kedar:
Because the sun hath looked on me, therefore I shine.

Solomon and Men's Chorus.

The beams of our house, O Beloved, are of cedar;
And over thy head the rafters are of pine.

Shulamite and Women's Chorus.

Oh, tell me, Beloved of my Soul, where thou feedest!
Yea, say where thou makest thy flocks rest at noon!

Solomon and Men's Chorus

O fairest among women, in thy goings if thou heedest
The footsteps of the flocks, they shall bring thee thy boon!

SHULAMITE.

Stay me! stay me with flagons!
Comfort me with apples!
For lo, I fast; for lo, I fast for love!

SOLOMON.

Come, come away! Rise up, my love, my fair one!
The winter's past: the rain hath passed above.

SHULAMITE AND CHORUS OF WOMEN.

Behold, the King led me to the chamber of his palace,
He brought me to the banquet; his banner hung above.

SOLOMON AND MEN'S CHORUS.

Thou art the Rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys:
As the lily among thorns, so, Beloved, is thy love!

SHULAMITE.

Stay me! stay me with flagons!
Comfort me with apples!
For lo, I fast; for lo, I fast for love!

SOLOMON.

Come, come away! Rise up, my love, my fair one!
The winter's past: the rain hath passed above!

SOLOMON AND MEN'S CHORUS.

Behold, thou art fair! my Beloved, thou art fair!
Behold, thou hast dove's eyes under thy locks!
Thy brows are as pomegranates bound in thy hair:
And the bounty thereof's as the fleece of the flocks.

SHULAMITE.

Stay me! stay me with flagons!
Comfort me with apples!
For lo, I fast; for lo, I fast for love!

SOLOMON.

Come, come away! Rise up, my love, my fair one!
The winter's past: the rain hath passed above.

SOLOMON AND CHORUS.

The flowers begin to shoot; it is time for the minstrels,
The voice of the turtle is heard in the land;

The fig-tree fills her fruit, the grape puts forth her tendrils :
Arise, my love, my fair one! the summer is at hand!

SOLOMON.

Awake, O North!
And come thou South :
Breathe on her mouth
Till the spices flow forth!

SHULAMITE.

Draw me, draw me!

CHORUS WOMEN.

We will run after thee!

SHULAMITE.

Yea, I will remember thy love more than wine!
Stay me with flagons! Straw me with apples!
I am my Beloved's : my Beloved is mine!

SOLOMON.

Fair thou art, fair thou art, my Beloved!
Pomegranates under thy locks are thy brows,
Honey are thy lips, and the speech thereof comely!
How fair is thy love, O sister, O spouse!

SOLOMON AND SHULAMITE.

S. Awake, O North!
And come thou South:
Breathe on her mouth
Till the spices flow forth!

SH. Stay me, stay me with flagons!
Comfort me with apples,
For lo, I fast;
For lo, I fast for love!

[*They embrace and pass under the canopy.*

S. Come, come away!
Rise up, my love, my fair one!

SH. Come, come away!
I am thy love, thy fair one!

The winter's past: the rain hath passed above!

[*The curtains of the canopy are let down.*

CHORUS.

Return, return, O Shulamite!
Return, that we may look on thee!
What shall we see? Behold a sight:
Two armies in one company!
Return, return, O Shulamite!

SOLOMON (*within*).

A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse,
  A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
And like pomegranates are her brows;
  And all her fruits their fragrance yield.

CHORUS.

Awake, O North, and come thou South!
Till fountain spills, till waters flow;
Come, Thou Beloved, from the hills
Like to a young hart, or a roe!
Return, return, O Shulamite,
Return, and let our eyes have light;
Return, that we may look on thee!

[*The doors of the bower open and reveal* OUR LADY *bearing the* CHILD *in her arms.*

SIMEON AND CHORUS.

O Lord! now lettest Thou
  Thy servants part in peace;
For behold we now
  Salvation born of These!

Which Thou hast made bright
For all on earth that dwell;
To the Gentiles for a Light,
And glory upon Israel.

Here ends the Pageant of OUR LADY.

CHRISTMAS SONGS

CHRISTMAS SONGS

(Written for Music)

I

The Maker of the sun and moon,
  The Maker of our earth,
Lo, late in time, a fairer boon,
  Himself is brought to birth!

How blest was all creation then,
  When God so gave increase:
And Christ, to heal the hearts of men,
  Brought righteousness and peace!

No star in all the heights of Heaven,
  But burned to see Him go:
Yet unto man alone was given
  His human Form to know.

His human Form, by man denied,
  Took death for human sin :
His endless Love, through faith descried,
  Still lives the world to win.

O perfect Love, outpassing sight,
  O Light beyond our ken,
Come down through all the world to-night,
  And heal the hearts of men !

2

When from His throne the Godhead bowed
  To human Form below,
The Heavens dropt down, and every cloud
  Hung loath to let Him go.
    Oh, bright the light, and white the night,
      When, full of favour stored,
    God's Maid lay down in Bethlehem town,
      To wait the coming Lord !

Before His Feet went down the snow
  Amid the tranquil night,
Till all the world lay white below
  To greet the Lord of Light.

Oh, bright the light, and white the night,
When, full of favour stored,
God's Maid lay down in Bethlehem town,
To wait the coming Lord !

The rugged hills and all the rocks
Were covered as with fleece ;
The towns were seen like folded flocks
To wait the Prince of Peace.
Oh, bright the light, and white the night,
When, full of favour stored,
God's Maid lay down in Bethlehem town,
To wait the coming Lord !

Oh, like a flock in field and fold,
The wintry world lay then,
On that fair night in days of old
When Christ came down to men.
Oh, bright the light, and white the night,
When, full of favour stored,
God's Maid lay down in Bethlehem town,
To wait the coming Lord !

3

Where now so fast, on this fair morn, away?
To find at last where Christ is born to-day!

Then sing we merrily :
'This day is verily
Noel and holiday. Alleluia!'

Raise round His rest your mirthful tones and sing!
One Maiden's breast on earth enthrones a King.
Then sing we loyally,
Round Him arrayed royally,
'Noel and lullaby. Alleluia!'

But when He wakes:—by sins in us weighed down,
His way He takes, and wins to Cross and Crown!
Then sing we lowlily,
Heartily, holily,
'Lo, we will follow Thee! Alleluia!'

4

Love, Joy, and Gentleness came down
On Christmas night to David's town,
Seeking to find therein a bed,
Or word of welcome to be said.
'O Bethlehem, behold thy Fate!
Run down, and open wide the gate,
And ask Him why He comes so late!

But when no room in all that press
Would hold Love, Joy, and Gentleness,

He to the manger turned aside,
Where kneeling beasts made welcome wide.
O sinful man, behold thy woe!
Dost thou already say Him no,
When 'tis for thee He lies so low?

Love, Joy, and Gentleness, He came
A second time, to bear man's shame;
When, to recover our great loss,
On Calvary He sought His Cross.
'O fearful Cross, O fruitful Tree,
Spread out thine arms and welcome Me,
Nor question why I come to thee!'

Then did the Cross in sore distress
Hold up Love, Joy, and Gentleness:
Hated, and scoffed at, scorned, and grieved,
Whom man cast out the wood received.
O sinful man, behold Him die!
And of thy cold heart question why
For thee it is He hangs so high!

5

'Oh, tell me why,' said Jerusalem,
Are the church-bells ringing in Bethlehem?'
'Oh, loud at their ringing my bells must be,
For the Lord our King hath been born in me!'

'If the Lord our King is in Bethlehem born,
The city of Zion is held in scorn!
Oh, what to-day or to-morrow am I,
If my Lord and King hath passed me by?'

Then fair to Zion our Lord sent down
His royal word from Bethlehem town:
'The day shall be when I pass not by;
To Jerusalem I will come to die.'

'Alas, the day! and alas, the morrow!
Thy coming at last shall bring me sorrow:
And tears must wash Thy raiment's hem,
'Mid tolling of bells for Jerusalem!'

6

'O shepherds, where went ye last night? and for why
With laughter and song did your young men go by?
Why left you your flocks in their fold on the down
To the wolves of the wild as you raced to the town?'

'O maidens, our hearts were as leaves in a storm!
The Breath of God blew, and the midnight was warm:
The wolves from the wild came and guarded our sheep,
And earth lay and laughed to the Heavens in her sleep.

'Wherever we trod flowers sprang from the ground,
The frozen stream opened and babbled with sound;
And fragrance, like incense, rose up from the sod,
Till earth as it rocked seemed a cradle for God.

'The stars were so clear that the night grew as day:
The wind and one Star and our hearts led the way!
For the voices of Angels had bidden us down
To the King of all shepherds in Bethlehem town.'

'O shepherds, glad shepherds, and when ye came there,
Now say if the King of the shepherds was fair :
Did He bear in His bosom the lambs ? Did His tongue
Sound sweet as He called to the ewes with their young ?'

'Yea, fair, He was fair : and all grandly He smiled !
And Our Lady herself had her arms round the Child :
And outside the stable in welcome to them
The church-bells were ringing through all Bethlehem.

'We worshipped our King who had come to His own :
On the lap of Our Lady all white was His throne :
And loud in that chamber most plaintive and deep
From the whole world around came the bleating of sheep.

'Then glad we returned to our flocks on the hill,
And found the wolves faithfully guarding them still:
And we told our good news of the Heavenly Child
To the flocks of the fold, and the wolves of the wild.'

7

It was in fair Bethlehem,
Where Love first lay,
That in the street on merry feet,
He heard the children play.
And all the running sound was sweet,
And plain as plain could be:
'Jesus, suffer little feet
To come to Thee!'

It was in fair Bethlehem,
They came a merry crowd,
They stopped before the stable door
And knocked thereon aloud:
'Oh, open, open!' cried they then,
'As wide as wide can be!
Heart of Jesus, suffer us
To come to Thee.'

It was in fair Bethlehem,
That Love spake low :
'Oh, come to-night!' He called to them,
'And I will not say no!'
'To-night, to-night!' they all entreat,
'As soon as soon may be!
Jesus, suffer little feet
To come to Thee!'

It was in fair Bethlehem,
That night the children died :
They came to play where Jesus lay,
And Mary's arms were wide.
'Oh, open, open!' cried they then,
'As wide as wide can be!
Heart of Childhood, suffer us
To come to Thee!'

8

'Who knocks to-night so late?'
The weary porter said.
Three Kings stood at the gate,
Each with a crown on head.

The serving-man bowed down ;
The inn was full, he knew.
Said he, 'In all this town
Is no fit place for you!'

A light the manger lit :
There lay the Mother meek.
Said they, 'This place is fit :
Here is the rest we seek !'

They loosed their latchet-strings ;
So stood they all unshod.
'Come in, ye Kings, ye Kings !
And kiss the Feet of God !'

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